Morice Timber Supply Area
Summary of Public Input

B.C. Ministry of Forests

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Morice Timber Supply Area, Summary of Public Input

Morice Timber Supply Area

Timber Supply Review

Summary of Public Input

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This is a summary of the public input that has been received on the Timber Supply Review in the Morice Timber Supply Area. This summary does not assess the feasibility or validity of the input or whether it relates to the clearly defined mandate of the chief forester in the allowable annual cut determination.

Background

As part of the review of timber supply in the Morice Timber Supply Area, the British Columbia Forest Service distributed the *Discussion Paper* and two technical reports¾the *Timber Supply Analysis* and the *Socio-Economic Analysis*. The public was encouraged to review and comment on the accuracy of the information in these documents and to provide additional information. This report summarizes the input received during the 90-day review period. This information was provided to the chief forester for his consideration when he reviewed the allowable annual cut for the Morice Timber Supply Area.

The first section of this summary, Public Review Process and Response, outlines the public review process implemented by the Forest Service, and describes the types of public input received. The second section, Public Input, summarizes the public input in sufficient detail to indicate the range of input received. The original submissions (with personal identifiers removed in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*) can be reviewed at the Morice Forest District office in Houston.

Public Review Process and Response

Morice Forest District staff actively solicited public input on the Timber Supply Review in the Morice Timber Supply Area through the following actions:

- copies of the three documents were mailed to approximately 60 organizations and businesses active within the Morice Timber Supply Area, as well as to members of the Forest District Advisory Committee

- a letter accompanying the mail-out offered group or individual meetings to discuss the Timber Supply Review. The *Discussion Paper* also included a response form, which readers were encouraged to complete and return to the district manager

- First Nations were offered information meetings to discuss the Timber Supply Review;

- two information sessions were held with representatives from the forest industry and local government (see Table 1)

- an open house was advertised extensively through a direct mail-out and newspaper and radio advertising

- newspaper articles were encouraged, and one was published by the local weekly newspaper

As Table 1 shows, about 35 individuals attended the information sessions and the open house. The Morice Forest District received one completed response form and three written submissions (see Appendix 1). The Morice Timber Supply Area licensees commissioned Timberline Forest Inventory Consultants to critique the *Timber Supply Analysis*. Two submissions based on that critique were made: collectively, they will be referred to as the "licensee review" in this summary.

Activity (No. of participants)	Date
Information sessions	
Elected officials	
District of Houston (10)	May 30, 1996
Interest groups	
Forest industry representatives (11)	March 8, 1996
Open House	

Table 1: Participation in public information activities

During development of the data package in 1993, meetings were held with representatives of the major licensees. First Nations were invited to meet and discuss the Timber Supply Review process during the development of the *Socio-Economic Analysis*. Of the six First Nations groups with territories within the district, three met with the consultant preparing the analysis.

Public Input

In this section, public input on the information presented in the three Timber Supply Review documents for the Morice Timber Supply Area is summarized under the following headings:

- Timber Supply Analysis
- Socio-Economic Analysis
- Discussion Paper

Public input on other ongoing government processes and initiatives that may influence timber supply in the Morice Timber Supply Area in the future is summarized at the end of this section.

Timber Supply Analysis

The licensee review provides detailed comments on the timber supply analysis carried out by the Forest Service. The comments centre mainly around two issues: timber productivity estimates and the size of the timber harvesting land base (i.e., Crown forest land that is currently considered feasible and economical for timber harvesting).

Timber Productivity Estimates

- **data analysis method**

The licensee review questions the way the Forest Service groups forest stand data for the purpose of its analysis. It says the method used results in groups that contain forests of very different productivity. However, the effect on short-term timber supply is acknowledged to be minimal.

- **estimates of mature timber volume**

The Forest Service estimates are considered reasonable, based on a comparison with actual cruise volumes and licensee annual reports.

- **productivity estimates for overmature forest sites**

The licensee review says the future productivity of sites currently holding overmature forests is underestimated in the Forest Service analysis. Although an increase in productivity resulting from a change in tree species was provided for, the industry says the Forest Service did not allow for a productivity increase due to better estimates of inherent site capability.

- **increased productivity from intensive silviculture**

The review states opportunities exist to increase timber production and achieve a better distribution of age classes through spacing, fertilization and commercial thinning. This was not factored into the Forest Service analysis, according to the review.

Size of the Timber Harvesting Land Base

- **environmentally sensitive areas**

The licensee review maintains that the area removed from the timber harvesting land base due to environmental sensitivity (including recreation and wildlife values) is excessive compared to other timber supply areas. Other constraints, such as green-up requirements and visual quality objectives, along with other removals from the harvesting land base, will protect recreation and wildlife values.

- **problem forest types**

According to the licensee review, licensees have harvesting experience in many of the problem forest types that were removed from the timber harvesting land base in the Forest Service analysis. It is the industry's position, therefore, that these forests should be included. The following specific comments are made:

1. certain deciduous-leading and hemlock-balsam stands were excluded on the basis of current inventory labels; instead, stand characteristics and estimates of potential future volumes should be used to define merchantability.

2. low productivity stands were excluded, regarding which the licensee review makes the following points:

i.acceptable volumes have been achieved from harvesting short lodgepole pine and spruce stands that were excluded in the Forest Service analysis

ii.immature stands that result from forest harvesting should be included since they are capable of being productive

iii.dense pine stands that can be thinned should be included

- **road reductions**

According to the licensee review, the area of land removed for future roads and landings is too high, given improved harvesting techniques and the use of existing roads for future harvesting.

- **protection of visual quality**

The licensees contend too much area has been excluded from the timber harvesting land base in the visually sensitive zones. They say harvesting could be moderately increased in the Retention and Partial Retention zones and that this is particularly recommended in pine stands to avoid beetle epidemics and maintain forest health. An approved inventory of visually sensitive areas is needed.

- **riparian buffers**

The Forest Service analysis indicates further reductions in the harvesting land base may be needed to meet the requirements of protecting riparian areas. The licensees, however, do not expect significant reductions.

Other Issues

The forest licensee review also comments on the following issues:

- **forest cover constraints**

The amount of area that can be harvested at any time is constrained by the need to wait for adjacent areas to green-up to stated forest cover requirements. The licensee review says that areas excluded from the timber harvesting land base can be used to meet these cover requirements, but in the Forest Service analysis this only occurred in the visually sensitive zones. The result is a conservative estimate of timber supply.

- **older forest cover requirements**

The Forest Service base case did not include an allowance for the retention of older forests since it was assumed that other reductions from the timber harvesting land base would accomplish these objectives. However, when considering requirements for biodiversity under the Forest Practices Code, according to the licensee review, old growth requirements should vary by species to take into account the fact that pine is considered mature at 81 years and other species at 121 years.

- **four-pass harvesting system**

The Forest Service analysis assumed a maximum 25 per cent disturbance within a management unit at any time; in other words, four harvesting passes would be required. The licensee review states that this is a conservative approach, given that most licensees use a three-pass system. However, even with a four-pass system the base case initial harvest level could be maintained for at least 90 years.

- **harvest rate**

The licensee review notes that increasing or decreasing the initial harvest by various amounts does not impact the long-term harvest level.

- **non-recoverable losses**

The licensees accept the Forest Service estimates of non-recoverable losses (from fire, insects and disease) as reasonable. The importance of giving priority to salvage operations to minimize these losses is stressed.

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Socio-Economic Analysis

The licensee review reiterates the importance of forestry in this timber supply area, noting that 36 per cent of all employment depends on forestry. It characterizes this area as one of the least economically diverse in the province, making a stable timber supply very important in order to achieve stable employment.

The licensees believe that, based on the results of the timber supply analysis, it is possible to practise responsible forest stewardship and provide for non-timber resources at the same time that jobs are protected.

The District of Houston makes the following comments about socio-economic issues mentioned in the Timber Supply Review documents:

- the reports do not emphasize strongly enough the significance of the forest industry to Houston or to B.C.; forestry is the largest single economic generator in the region.

- public sector employment is less than the 20 per cent shown due to recent reductions by provincial and federal governments; most public sector employment is with the Ministry of Forests.

- tourism, hunting and fishing rely heavily on access provided by logging roads; tourism continues to grow in importance as part of the local economy.

- the District of Houston depends on forestry-related property taxes (from employers and employees) to maintain community services.

- the average income in Houston is the highest of any community in the Bulkley-Nechako Regional District.

- the *Socio-Economic Analysis* describes consumer-oriented businesses that are tied to the forest industry as "supporting businesses." In fact, as well as servicing the forest industry, these businesses facilitate growth and expansion of the industry, so there is a mutual dependence.

In addition, the District of Houston makes the following points regarding the environment:

- the types of damage to fish habitat described in the Forest Service analysis have not been allowed for several years and will be minimized by the implementation of regulations in the Forest Practices Code.

- grizzly bear populations are increasing throughout the Morice Timber Supply Area.

- the statement that logging changes the natural balance of species following disturbance is misleading; the district says leaving the forest alone can often result in much harsher consequences, e.g., fires in old-growth forests.

- no further reductions to the land base are required to protect older forests.

The individual respondent questions whether sustained fibre production will achieve sustained economic benefit and social objectives. This individual says that since most infrastructure (such as mills and access roads) is already in place, it is possible employment may decrease even with a stable timber supply.

Discussion Paper

The main issue raised in the *Discussion Paper* that prompted public input was the allowable annual cut.

The licensee review states that the allowable annual cut should remain at the current level, and points to the opportunity to increase timber supply through Forest Renewal B.C.'s enhanced silviculture programs. The industry is confident in the timber supply analysis, and believes the outcome is based on well-founded information not estimates.

The District of Houston also supports maintenance of the allowable annual cut at the current level. Its submission says this will maintain the status quo and assure the future and stability of forestry-related industries, services and employment opportunities. The district believes the base case is a conservative portrayal; current initiatives (harvesting lower volume stands, intensive silviculture through Forest Renewal B.C., etc.) and better information (definition of visually and environmentally sensitive areas, etc.) suggest the land base and its productivity have been underestimated in the Forest Service analysis.

The individual respondent makes the point that, in setting the allowable annual cut, it is important to consider the impacts of different rates of cut on other economic sectors, such as tourism and fisheries. This individual is also of the opinion that the allowable annual cut should be based on a conservative estimate of what land base might be available in the future, given anticipated changes resulting from protected areas, First Nations treaty negotiations, etc.

Related issues and processes

Neither the licensees nor the District of Houston anticipate any significant timber supply impacts from the implementation of the Forest Practices Code. However, the licensee review says it is too early to estimate the impacts of the Morice Land and Resource Management Plan.

Appendix 1

Submissions received by the Morice Forest District

Local government
District of Houston

Industry
Northwood Pulp and Timber Ltd.
Timber Supply Area licensees (prepared by Timberline Forest Inventory Consultants on behalf of Northwood Pulp and Timber Ltd., Houston Forest Products Co., and Fraser Lake Sawmills)

General public
One submission